

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
INFO WHITE HOUSE 0291

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 137423

NODIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PEPR, US, SF

SUBJECT: MESSAGE TO VORSTER

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY
FOR AMBASSADOR ONLY

1. AFTER DISCUSSION WITH WHITE HOUSE, WE HAVE DECIDED NOT
REPEAT NOT TO SEND PROPOSED LETTER FROM PRESIDENT CARTER
TO PRIME MINISTER VORSTER. WE BELIEVE THAT, GIVEN VORSTER'S
CURRENT MOOD, PRESIDENTIAL LETTER WOULD BE ADVANTAGEOUS FOR
YOU ONLY IF IT WERE CONFINED TO EXPRESSION OF A) CONCERN
ABOUT INCORRECT IMPRESSION THAT THE ADMINISTRATION IS HOST-
ILE TOWARD SOUTH AFRICA AND B) DESIRE FOR FRIENDLIER RELA-
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TIONS, AND INCLUDED NO NEGATIVE REFERENCE WHATEVER ABOUT
APARTHEID. IT WOULD BE BOTH INAPPROPRIATE AND MISLEADING
FOR LETTER TO STATE OUR WISH FOR IMPROVED RELATIONS WITHOUT
AT THE SAME TIME VOICING CONTINUED CONCERN ABOUT RACE RELA-
TIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA.

2. THERE ARE POINTS IN THE DRAFT LETTER WHICH COULD BE

USEFULLY EMPLOYED IN A CONVERSATION WITH VORSTER. THEREFORE WHEN YOU MEET WITH HIM, YOU MAY WISH TO DRAW ON THE CONTENT OF THE DRAFT LETTER, STATING, AS YOU FEEL APPROPRIATE, THAT WHAT YOU ARE CONVEYING EXPRESSES THE VIEWS OF

THE PRESIDENT. TEXT OF DRAFT LETTER FOLLOWS: BEGIN TEXT.
MY DEAR MR. PRIME MINISTER: I AM TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE ARRIVAL OF OUR NEW AMBASSADOR TO THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA, WILLIAM EDMONDSON, TO SEND YOU THIS LETTER. AMBASSADOR EDMONDSON HAS LONG EXPERIENCE IN AFRICA, INCLUDING YOUR COUNTRY, AND HIS COUNSEL IS VALUED WITHIN MY ADMINISTRATION. HIS APPOINTMENT AS MY PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE IS AN INDICATION OF THE IMPORTANCE I ATTACH TO OUR OFFICIAL RELATIONS. I THINK IT APPROPRIATE, AS HE ASSUMES HIS NEW DUTIES, THAT WE REVIEW THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES, IF POSSIBLE DISPEL SOME UNDERSTANDINGS WHICH I BELIEVE HAVE ARISEN, AND ACHIEVE GREATER MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING.

LIKE YOURSELF, I AM TROUBLED BY THE PRESENT STATE OF RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES. I AM PARTICULARLY TROUBLED BY THE IDEA WHICH HAS BEEN VOICED THAT MY ADMINISTRATION IS IMPLACABLY HOSTILE TO SOUTH AFRICA AND THAT U.S. POLICY REGARDING YOUR COUNTRY HAS BEEN PUNITIVE OR RETRIBUTIVE IN NATURE. THIS SIMPLY IS NOT OUR ATTITUDE. AS YOU ARE AWARE, THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT--THE CONGRESS AS WELL
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AS THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH--HAS STRONG VIEWS ABOUT APARTHEID. HOWEVER, THE ADMINISTRATION'S POLICY IN THAT REGARD IS INTENDED TO BE CONSTRUCTIVE, NOT CONFRONTATIONAL.

AMERICANS ARE WELL AWARE OF THE DEEP COMPLEXITY OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN SITUATION AND, PERHAPS AS MUCH AS ANY SOCIETY, UNDERSTAND THE DIFFICULTIES THAT FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE INVOLVES. WE OURSELVES STILL HAVE A LONG WAY TO GO TO ACHIEVE THE KIND OF JUSTICE AND INTERRACIAL HARMONY WE SEEK. HOWEVER, OUR REALIZATION OF THE MAGNITUDE OF SOUTH AFRICA'S PROBLEMS DOES NOT IN ANY WAY LESSEN OUR SINCERE BELIEF THAT FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE IS NECESSARY. WITH RESPECT TO THAT CHANGE, I WANT TO EMPHASIZE, AS VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE SAID LAST YEAR IN VIENNA, THAT WE HAVE NEITHER PRESCRIBED ANY SPECIFIC FORMULA FOR CHANGE NOR ANY TIMETABLE IN WHICH IT NEEDS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED. IT CONTINUES TO BE OUR VIEW THAT SUCH DECISIONS CAN ONLY BE MADE BY SOUTH AFRICANS OF ALL RACES WORKING TOGETHER.

THE ARRIVAL OF AMBASSADOR EDMONDSON PROVIDES A GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW THE STATUS OF OUR RELATIONS. I HAVE ASKED HIM TO TALK CANDIDLY ABOUT OUR PERCEPTIONS AND TO REPORT

TO ME ON YOUR VIEWS. WITH CORDIAL BEST WISHES. SINCERELY,
END TEXT. CHRISTOPHER

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